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NEAR EAST/AFRICA BRANCH
OFFICE OF REPORTS AND ESTIMATES
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WORKING PAPER

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NEAR EAST/AFRICA BRANCH

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Vol. IV No.9

For Week Ending
9 March 1949

GREECE

New guerrilla policy: There are indications that the Communist high command may have decided to shelve at least temporarily its policy of all-out activity throughout Greece, instead restricting large-scale operations to northern Greece while it seeks the support of the large Slavo-Macedonian population of the Greek-Yugoslav-Bulgarian border region. One possible sign of such a shift is the guerrilla radio's announcement 28 February that a Macedonian state would be proclaimed this month. Another is the current guerrilla buildup across the Bulgarian border from Eastern Macedonia, where the use of Slavo-Macedonian forces is probably contemplated.

Such a program would be immediately useful in view of the recent reverses suffered by the guerrillas in central and southern Greece and by their growing need for replacements in the ranks; in addition, the Cominform might be impressed by the ultimate benefits a Macedonian state might provide--an Aegean port, a land route between Bulgaria and Albania, a serious blow to Greece's economic resources, and a strategic threat to Greece, Yugoslavia, and Turkish Thrace. Nevertheless, an attempt to set up a Macedonian state would create serious problems for the Communists. In spite of strenuous efforts, the guerrillas have failed to hold any sizable area in Greece, and even with Slavo-Macedonian reinforcements, they would be too weak to hold ground against the Greek Army without open intervention by the satellites. Another difficulty would be the reluctance of the majority of Greek Communists and fellow-travellers to agree on dismemberment of Greece. By even wooing the Slavo-Macedonians, the KKE is already running the danger of splitting its own ranks and losing the support of the nationalist element among the guerrillas; if Cominform orders ran directly counter to the nationalist interests of the Greek guerrillas, probably no more than 25 percent of the rank and file could be relied on for support.

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TURKEY

Bosphorus maneuvers: Recent combined maneuvers in the Bosphorus area indicate that the training of Turkey's armed forces has not yet progressed to the point where the strait can be successfully defended against a sudden, strong attack. Although a preliminary report from the US Military Attache contains no criticism of basic, small unit operations, it does note serious deficiencies at the higher level of command and coordination--notably in command post operation, communications, and employment of reconnaissance aviation--and weaknesses in the use of such specialized equipment as submarine detection devices and searchlights. These results were not unexpected, in view of the relatively short time during which US equipment and US training have been available, and the lessons derived from the maneuvers should materially assist in the long, slow process of modernizing the Turkish armed forces.

Reactionary trend denied: Parliamentary charges of an alarming spread of reactionary sentiment in Turkey, encouraged by the government's more lenient policy toward religious instruction, recently led the Minister of Justice to read some interesting figures to the Grand National Assembly. Although the figures do not indicate any decided trend in any direction, they do tend, if accurate, to support the Minister's assertion that the number of reactionaries is lessening, while leftist sentiment is on the increase. For example, arrests for alleged offenses against the Law on Sorcery, Monasteries, and Convents were 227 in 1947, and 54 in 1946. The number of persons imprisoned for violation of the Hat Law (i.e. the anti-fez law) was smaller in 1947 than in the previous year, while the number sentenced to prison for intoning the Call to Prayer in Arabic (despite the recent incident in the Assembly itself) was 24 in 1947--or 17 less than in the preceding year. On the other hand, 26 persons were imprisoned in 1947 on charges of leftism, according to the Minister of Justice, and last year the number rose to 98. It should not be inferred that a dangerous growth in leftist sentiment is under way in Turkey. It is not. However, if the Minister's statistics convey anything, they do indicate that alarmist charges of a strengthening of the forces of reaction are greatly exaggerated.

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PALESTINE

Armistice Developments: Armistice negotiations between Israel and Transjordan at Rhodes and between Israel and Lebanon at Ras en Naqura are not going well and are unlikely to lead to early agreements. At Rhodes difficulties are being encountered in delimiting the Transjordanian and Iraqi military sectors in central Palestine, and at Ras en Naqura Israel is demanding military concessions from Syria before agreeing to withdraw its forces from Lebanese soil. In effect, Israel is asking Transjordan and Lebanon to make commitments on behalf of Iraq and Syria, respectively, who show no signs of acquiescing in such a procedure. At the same time both sets of negotiations are bedevilled by the question of their scope. At Rhodes there is still considerable question as to whether the Transjordan delegates will attempt to discuss such basic issues as the future of Jerusalem, Lydda, Ramle, and the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv corridor. Israel has indicated that these are major issues which must await consideration in a final peace conference. At the same time, however, at Ras en Naqura Israel is demanding that the Israeli-Lebanese frontier be rectified in the armistice agreement. Israel's inconsistency is probably explained by Transjordan's relative strength and Lebanon's weakness. Moreover, Israel is not anxious to discuss major issues with Transjordan since it continues to distrust British motives and fears that the UK is influencing the Transjordan negotiators.

The new cabinet: The formation of Israel's first non-provisional government is notable for the strong control exercised by MAPAI throughout. When Prime Minister Ben-Gurion invited the other Israeli parties to join MAPAI in the new coalition, he made it clear that those accepting must accept the principle of collective responsibility and MAPAI's major policies--friendship and cooperation with both the US and the USSR, an Israeli-Arab alliance, a majority of constructive labor elements in the government, and complete civic equality for women, Christians, and Moslems. This point was emphasized when MAPAM, the left socialist party which had played a part second only to MAPAI in the provisional government, demanded as a condition to its joining the new cabinet that Ben-Gurion promise: (1) to decline any Marshall Plan aid offered Israel; (2) to refuse bases to the Western powers; and (3) to balance trade

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between the Eastern and Western blocs. Although Ben-Gurion is still holding four portfolios open for MAPAM and the General Zionists (who wanted more than the single post offered them) he refused to commit himself on MAPAM's demands, and the MAPAM Council has voted 150-33 to remain in opposition.

The new Cabinet announced by Ben-Gurion on 4 March is thus more completely dominated than was the provisional government by MAPAI, whose seven posts include all of the important ones. The United Religious Bloc has three portfolios and the Progressives and the Sephardim one each. Even if MAPAM does not reconsider its decision, this combination should provide the government with an effective majority of 73 seats out of the 120 in the Assembly. Although without MAPAM the government will be generally more conservative than it was expected to be, its policy will be comparatively clear cut and predictable, and it will continue to maintain theoretic neutrality while actually leaning toward the West. The advantage of having unchallenged MAPAI leadership and responsibility in the government is overbalanced, however, by the disadvantage of having the second strongest party outside the government, particularly when a constitution is to be written. Whereas MAPAI, which is pledged to socialism and civil equality for all, will have to obtain its working majority through cooperation with the older, more conservative elements in the state, MAPAM, composed largely of young, militarily trained agricultural settlers and unhampered by the responsibilities of government, will be able to go all out in criticizing the government. In concentrating its opposition against the "pro-West" and "subservient" foreign policy of the MAPAI government, MAPAM may find itself becoming increasingly pro-Soviet in its views.

The Herut, the Communist Party, and the Stern Gang were not asked to join in the coalition and will continue their vindictive, if ineffectual opposition to the government.

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IRAN

Tudeh trial: The current court martial of fourteen leaders of the recently outlawed Tudeh Party on charges of "activity against constitutional monarchy and diffusion of Marxist ideology," presents elements of risk for the Government. While the Party's Soviet connections are a matter of record, the Iranian Government's repeated accusations of a Tudeh conspiracy against the government, of which the abortive attempt on the Shah's life was only a part, have been largely unsupported, and unless the government produces convincing evidence to prove the charges, a public trial may well boomerang. Attorneys for the defendants are three anti-Court members of the Majlis who are reputedly clever and are expected to make an appeal to the declaration of human rights. These lawyers undoubtedly represent an important section of the Iranian public--one which opposes the extreme counter-measures taken to preserve and maintain public order and views antagonistically any attempt by the Court and army to attain greater power through the present crisis.

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NOTED IN BRIEF

Popular aid activity in support of the Greek guerrillas shows signs of reviving. Recent Communist propaganda has seized on several alleged acts of "monarcho-fascist" terrorism, apparently in an effort to create a rallying cry for pro-guerrilla aid. Aid campaigns have been pushed in Switzerland, Soviet Germany, and Hungary during the last month.

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Although the Greek guerrilla radio has announced that a number of newly-trained political commissars are being sent out to stimulate recruiting and sabotage in the towns, it is unlikely that any major results will be achieved. Meanwhile, the guerrilla tactical concentrations in the Peloponnesus, central Greece, and Eastern Macedonia are still being harried by the Greek Army, which was responsible for 3,150 guerrilla casualties during February.

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Turkish opposition party leaders are willing to believe that the government may provide satisfactory amendments to the electoral law, but they are still skeptical about the ultimate results. As one spokesman asked pointedly, "How can we be sure that all the administrative officials in all the provinces will obey the law?"

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Egyptian officials are still concerned about the possibility of public demonstrations on the disclosure of the extent of Egyptian military setbacks in Palestine, and only reluctantly was the complete Rhodes armistice text deposited in the Senate. Nevertheless, there is now less likelihood of runaway disorders, in view of the lack of violent public objections to the armistice thus far. The press, including the Wafdist papers, has either praised the agreement indirectly or has emphasized the beneficial training acquired by the army in Palestine.

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Syrian negotiations with the Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company and the Middle East Pipeline Company have encountered serious snags. Differences of interpretation have arisen over a supplementary convention to the Trans-Arabian draft concession, and the Middle East management has turned down Syria's demand that a percentage of payments under the concession be made in dollars.

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Israeli President Weizmann has privately told Ambassador McDonald that he is worried lest the present rate of immigration prove to be beyond Israel's capacity for absorption. Israeli officials have remained publicly confident on the subject.

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The recent flare-up of fighting between Iraqi and Israeli troops in the central Palestinian coastal region points up a probable trouble spot should current Arab-Israeli armistice negotiations break down. The proximity of this sector to the important Tel Aviv-Haifa thoroughfare, and the continued refusal of Iraqi leaders to enter direct military negotiations with the Israelis have placed this region high on the list of Arab-controlled areas the Israeli Army would like to eliminate.

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The Shah has officially presented to the Iranian Majlis his decree convoking a Constituent Assembly, and elections for the 272 delegates are scheduled to take place within a few weeks. The next step in constitutional reform will take place when the Majlis considers legislation for creating a Senate. The vote on this issue should provide a real division of strength between the confirmed opponents of any greater powers for the Shah and those who have been won over to his side.

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Afghanistan has filed a written protest in Karachi against a recent statement by Pakistan's Governor-General that the GOP considers the North West frontier tribal area "an inseparable part of Pakistan" and "is as interested in its prosperity, strength and general welfare as it is in any other part of the dominion." Charging that this declaration violates previous commitments made by the GOP, Afghanistan's protest indicated that its Ambassador to Pakistan, who is now in Kabul, would not return to Karachi unless the declaration were retracted or clarified satisfactorily.

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The New Delhi Commonwealth Conference's offer to send a joint conciliation group to Burma has not obtained any clear-cut reply from Burma, although the Burmese Attorney General-- apparently in answer to an earlier proposal by India--has arrived with a message that conciliation is inappropriate since the Karens are rebelling against their legal government. If Burmese Prime Minister Thakin Nu, following this line, definitely declines the Conference's offer, it is unlikely that India will press the matter further.

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The day set by Akali Sikhs for a nationwide protest against India's arrest of their leader, Master Tara Singh, passed uneventfully, with only a few arrests. The lack of support for the Akalis indicates that the party has little political significance and that the government's supporters among the Sikhs now have the upper hand.

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